

"That Other Promise: Watch"

Scripture: Matthew 24:32-42

(Illustration of Milan Cathedral and three doors)

At the Cathedral in Milan there are three inscriptions over the respective doorways leading into the cathedral. Over the right-hand door is the inscription: "All that pleases is but for a moment." Over the left-hand door is the inscription; "All that troubles is but for a moment." But over the center door there is the simple sentence: "Nothing is important save that which is eternal."

That somewhat sums up the thinking of ~~xxx~~ much of the world. People are either concerned about having a good time and being entertained that many of them think of nothing else. Or else they are a part of the crowd that is only concerned about their particular problems to the exclusion of never giving a thought to others. And just how many are concerned with the things that are eternal. The President of Lancaster Bible College said just this past week something which makes a lot of sense. He was talking about being involved in church work and how we get caught up in the details of it all to the point of getting bent out of shape if our pet project is not carried out. The solution he said is to ask the question, "What difference will it make in the church a hundred years from now?" And you see the truth of that if you consider what some church people think is earthshattering. To get mad because a room is not painted green as we think it should be, or have yellow drapes. What difference will that make in a hundred years? But if we refuse to spend money to bring more people to the Lord, what difference would that make in a hundred years? You see, it is a matter of priorities. What is, or isn't important in the church?

I believe we can also see this in the matter of what church members and churches teach. There are churches where nothing but prophecy and future events are being taught. And the members of some of those churches are seeking to always go and hear yet another preacher giving his message on things to come. Then there are churches that will not under any circumstances look at the things yet to come such as the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. One extreme is as bad as the other, and there is always the danger of going overboard when considering these things. There is a certain balance we must seek to maintain, but it is imperative that we are aware that the Bible speaks of the return of Jesus Christ. There is a word which Jesus used that is recorded eleven different times in the Gospels. The word in Greek is "GREGOREUO" (GREG - GOR - YOO - O), and it means, "to keep awake, be vigilant, wake, be watchful," Literally it means, "WATCH."

In trying to determine what we should "Watch," we need to look briefly at some of the events which Jesus Himself said would take place which would indicate the nearness of His next appearance. This week we have jumped ahead a little in order to see some things that most Biblical scholars believe have happened. And then next week we will look at things that are happening and will continue to happen leading up to that Appearance of Jesus Christ for His Church.

In the 32nd verse Jesus was teaching His disciples by telling them, "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors," verses 32 & 33.

Almost all Biblical scholars concede that when a fig tree is mentioned in Scripture it has

to do with the nation of Israel. Jesus had told His disciples a number of things to come and He reminds them that they could interpret the season of the year by looking at a fig tree. It doesn't take a genius to know that after winter, when we see the buds beginning to grow on the trees that Spring is here and it won't be long until summer follows Spring and so on. So Jesus reminded the disciples that since they could deduce this, they were to look for signs that would point them to His return. Israel was no longer a nation as God intended it to be. The Jews were scattered to the far ends of the earth and those living in Palestine were a conquered people. They were held captive in their land by the hated Romans in the time of Jesus. Since anything said about the restoration of the nation of Israel could be construed by the Romans as treason, Jesus had to speak in hidden terms. But also, since Jesus said He didn't know when this future event would take place He had to tell it in such ~~xx~~ a way so if it occurred while the Jews were still under bondage they would know what was taking place, or if it took place in distant years, it could still be seen as God's fulfilled prophecy. The nation of Israel, (the fig tree), could not put forth leaves until it was once again a tree, (or a nation). It was in 1948 against great odds that the nation of Israel was born. Within a short period of time it became recognized as Israel by most of the world. With two short clashes with the Arabs Israel gained Jerusalem and the land which was given ~~them~~ to them by Almighty God. They thus became a world power when by all rights, the Arab world should have obliterated them.

Jesus told His disciples further, "Verily I say unto you, 'This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.' verse 34.

Liberal scholars have taken this to mean the people who were living at the time, namely the disciples, and since they passed away and that prophecy wasn't fulfilled in their lifetimes, it will not be fulfilled. But the true interpretation is that the word "generation² can refer not only to a time period, but to a race or group of people. Jesus was saying that the Jews, their race would not pass away until all of this was fulfilled. Jewish history will not end until the Battle of Armageddon which is to take place at the end of the period of Tribulation.

Then Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away," vs 35. Two things will remain for ever. God's Word, and people. And then Jesus reiterates what He has said before and He tells what the conditions will be when all this takes place, (read verses 37-41). Noah was building the ark for 120 years. During that time there was no slackening of the people from their sin and worldliness. Our times greatly parallel those days. We are a pleasure seeking world with little or no regard for the things of God. At the time of the flood all of the people were destroyed, but at the Second Coming of the Lord some will be saved and others will be lost. Bible interpreters tell us that the references Jesus is ~~xx~~ making here of two people together, one saved, the other lost has to do with the judgement following the Battle of Armageddon. That is true, but I also believe it is a reference to what will take place at the Rapture when Jesus appears for His Church. Only those who are believers will be taken and those who are unbelievers will be left. That is why it is impera-

(Illus Cathedrl Milan & 3 dorts)

Rt hand dor=ALL THAT PLEASIS IS BUT 4 A MOMENT
Lft dor=ALL THAT TRUBLES IS BUT 4 A MOENTH
Centr dor=NUTHING IS IMPORTANT, SAV THAT WH/IS ETRNL
(Illus Pres Lanc Bib Coleg & wat dif maks 100 yrs)

Js recod as say word 11 tims in Gospis
 GCREUO - GREG - GOR - YOO - O =Means-KEEP AWAK,B VIGILNT,
 WAK, B WATCHFL, & LITRLY WATCH
vss 32-33 - Fig tree
Vs 34=Genratin
Vs 35=G's Word,& people
Vss 37-41=Js reitrat
Vs 42=WATCH is TH/KEY WORD OF THAT OTHR PROMIS
(Illus fathr tel 3yr-old wen cum home)
FIRST=need 2hav selvs prep
& need 2prep othrs as wel
HOW IS IT W/UT
IS UR HOUS IN ORDR?
 CUN U HONESLY SAY HIS CUM IS B ANTICIPAT W/OUT RESERVATINS?
We hav oprtunty 2m^qk evrth certin

DEAD V-42

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(Illus Cathedral in Milan & three dorways)
That sumwat sum up think of much of worl;peo R eithr concernd
bout hav gud tim & B entraind,that many think of nuth els
Or els they R part of crowd only concrnd bout ther partic prob
 xclusin of nevr giv thot 2othrs

 jus how many R concern w/thin s that R etrnln?
(Illus Pres Lanc Bibl Coleg & quote=Wat dif wil mak in Ch 100yrs?)

2get mad caus rm no paint gr & draps yelo=Wat dif 100 yrs??

2neglec giv mony 20 peo brot 2 Xp=Wat dif 100 yrs mak??

 U C, it is mattt of prioritys - Wat is,or isnt import in th/Ch?
I Bliev can also C this in mattt wat ch/membrs Bliev & Ch/teach
ther R ch's when nuth but proph/futur events taut & membrs go
wherevr this is subj & only thing they kno

 then ther Ch's wil not pr/teach anyth bout Raptur/2nd Cum
One extrem is as bad as othr 4we canB caut up w/hed in clouds &
neglect minstry 2 othrs, or we ignor Word of God
ther cert balanc we need hav & impertiv we awar Bib spks of
return of Js Xp

Ther word Js used wh/record 11 tims in Gospis
In Grk word is=GREGGOREUO=GREG-GOR-YOO-O & it means=keep awak,
B vigilnt,wak,B watchfl & litrly WATCH

 in try detrmn wat we shud WATCH,we need lk brifly at sum events
wh/Js Himself sed wud tak plac wh/wud indicat nearnes nex appear
this wk we jumpd ahed litl in ord'r "C sum thing mos Bib schlrs
Bliev hav hapy

 & then nex wk wil lk sum thing R hapy & wil continu 2hapy lead
up 2that apearanc of Js Xp 4 His Ch

Vss 32-33=READ
 almos all Bib schlrs conced wen fig tree mentin in Scrip it has
2do w/natin of Is.

 had tol discipis numbr thing 2cum & He remin them they cud
interp seasn of yr by fig tree
 it duznt tak genius 2kno aftn wintr we C buds Bgin gro & spr
 is here & no long til summr folo spr & so on
 So Js tel discipis sinc cud deduc this,they wer 2lk 4 signs
 pt 2 His return

Is. was no lngr natin as G intend it 2B-th/Jews wer sactr 2far
ends of erth & thoz liv in Palstin wer conqurd peo
they wer held captiv in ther land by hadt Rom in tim of Js
 sinc anyth sed bout restratin of Is, as natin cudB contrud by
Romns as treason,Js had spk hiddn terms
 but also sinc Js didnt kno wen futur even wud tak plac, had 2
tel in such way so if it occur whil Jews undr bondag,wud kno
wat was tak plac

 or if tuk plac in distant yrs,cudB seen as fulfil G's proph
Th/matin of Is.=fig tree,cudnt put 4th lvs until once agin natin
in 1948 hatin of Is. was born & w/in short periu of tim IS.
was recogniz by mos of world - all this agin grt odds

w/2 short clashs w/much superior numbrs of Arabs, Is, gaind 2/
Jeru & th/land wh/givn 2them by G
thus Beam worl powr wen by rites shud hav bin oblitterat by Arabs
Vs 34=Librl schlrs takn this 2mean th/peo who wer liv at tim,
namly discips, & sinc they passd away that proph no fulfil ther
liftimp& thus wil not B fulfilld
br' tru interp is word=GENRATIN can refr not only 2tim periud,
b2race or grp of peo
Js was say, Jews, ther race wudnt pas away until all this fulfil
Jewish histry wil not end until Battl Armagedon wh/2tak plac
at end periud of Trib
vs 35=2thing las 4evr-G's Word, & people
Vss 37-41=Js reitrat wat sed B⁴ & tel wat conditins willB wen all
this tak plac
Noah was bild ark 4-120 yrs & dur that tim ther no slak of sin
& wordlines
our times grtly parrel thoz days
We R pleasur seek worl w/littl no regar 4things of G
at tim of flud all peo of worl wer destroyd, but at 2nd Cum of L
sum willB savd & othrs lost
Bib intrps tel us ref Js maks 2peo 2gethr-Isavd, othr los has 2do
w/judgmen folo Battl Armagedon
this tru, bmt I also Bliev it ref 2wat wil tak plac at Rap wen Js
apear 4His Ch
only thoz who R Blievrs wilB takn & thoz who unBlievrs left
that why impertiv we detrm our destny B⁴ we depart this lif
eithr thru deth or th/Raptur
th/warn is givn by Js at end this portin Scrip=READ Vs 42
B prprd 4that day 2happn at any tim=WATCH IS TH/KEY WORD 4THAT OTHR
PROMISE
(Ilus fathr tel 3yr-old wen wud cum home)
& this how shudB 4us we shudB lk w/anticpatin 2 th/Coming of The
Lo⁴us & His Ch
but it not 2B tim of idlnes
as we realiz th/shortnes of th/tim by th/signs we C, our watch-
fulnes shudB a tim of reap 4th/kingdm so that othrs may hav
wat is ours thru Xp
FIRST=we need 2hav ourselvs prep'd, & then we need 2prep othrs as
well
How is it w/U?
Is Ur hous in ord'r?
Can U honestl say that His cuming is B anticpatd w/out reserv??
We hav oppty 2day 2mak evrth certin
th/warning needs 2ring in our ears=WATCH THERFORE:FOR YE KNOW
NOT WAT HOUR UR LORD DOTH COME.

Shirley & Ralph Charles Link, Nancy Link, Dale with Lianne his wife, Lloyd Link with Karen his wife
Jessica in front of Ralph C. Link
Ethan and Alica in front of R. Dale and Lianne Link (the eldest son & family)









Ralph C. Link
153 Keck Road
Sarver, Pa. 16055
(412) 352-1103

Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Married: December 15, 1951

Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill

Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

SCHOOLING:

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

PASTORATES:

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United
Church of Christ

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Diety of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.